

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 313

EC 308 004

AUTHOR Johnson, Jane; Goldberg, Paula
TITLE Transition and Beyond...Now What? Guide for Parents of Youth with Disabilities.
INSTITUTION PACER Center, Inc., Minneapolis, MN.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 71p.; "With special contributions by Marge Goldberg."
AVAILABLE FROM PACER Center, Inc., 8161 Normandale Blvd., Bloomington, MN 55437. Tel: 888-248-0822 (Toll Free); 612-827-2966 (Voice); Tel: 612-827- 7770 (TTY); Fax: 612-827-3065; e-mail: pacer@pacer.org; Web site: <http://www.pacer.org>.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees; Child Advocacy; *Disabilities; Educational Legislation; *Federal Legislation; *Individualized Education Programs; *Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Conferences; *School Responsibility; Secondary Education; Self Advocacy; Services; Student Participation; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This guide on transition services for Minnesota students with disabilities provides parents with information on student's rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that is available, how to obtain it, and how to improve the system to provide for transition needs that are not being met. Separate sections address: (1) the importance of starting early transition planning; (2) learning options; (3) transition requirements under IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Minnesota transition legislation; (4) questions that need to be addressed when transition planning; (5) self-advocacy and encouraging independence; (6) types of transition services, including vocational rehabilitation, residential services, training programs, financial assistance, health care, transportation, and recreation and leisure activities; (7) navigating the system, collaborating with agencies, and support networks; and (8) advocacy and serving on advisory committees. An appendix includes transition-related excerpts from the federal IDEA and from Minnesota state law. A list of Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers is provided along with additional transition resources. A description of the PACER Center and its programs is also included. (CR)

Transition & Beyond...

...Now What?

A guide for parents of youth with disabilities

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Transition and Beyond Now What?

By Jane Johnson, Transition Specialist
Paula Goldberg, Executive Director

With special contributions by Marge Goldberg,
former PACER Center Co-Director



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Editor: Louise Jones, Caryn Pernu
Design and layout: Melanie Wilbur

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PACER Center, Inc.
4826 Chicago Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55417
(612) 827-2966 voice
(612) 827-7770 TTY
(800) 53 PACER (toll-free in Minnesota)
(888) 248-0822 (toll-free nationwide)
(612) 827-3065 fax
pacer@pacer.org
www.pacer.org

Address Effective November 2000
8161 Normandale Blvd.
Bloomington, MN 55437

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Introduction

Being a teenager is not easy! Besides the physical and emotional changes that can sometimes be overwhelming, there's also the pressure to start planning for life after high school. Yes, it's hard. But it's even more complicated for children with disabilities. Fortunately, there is a process to help youth with disabilities make the transition from school life to adult life.

Parents have an important part to play in the transition process. They know their children best and can represent and support them in their journey to achieve a full and rewarding adult life. This guide will show you, as a parent of a child with disabilities, some of the ways you can make a difference during the transition years.

On the following pages you will find information, suggestions, and some real-life stories to help you prepare your child for a successful transition to life in the adult world. This guide will show you:

- your child's rights and responsibilities under the law.
- how to help your child become more independent.
- what services are available and how to obtain them.
- how to improve the system to provide transition needs that are not being met.

Sheryl and Bob were anxious about their son's future. They knew they could meet Eric's needs as long as he lived at home, but Eric had just turned 16 and was eager to cut some of the strings that tied him to his parents.

Eric uses a wheelchair because of his cerebral palsy. He has severe learning difficulties in math and reading, and his speech is hard to understand when people first meet him.

Sheryl and Bob wondered what Eric would do when he finished high school. Where would he live and work? Would he go to college? How would he get around? What could they do to help Eric prepare for life after high school?

Starting Early

Initial planning for transition from school to adult life for students with disabilities must begin by age 14, according to federal law. Decisions on specific services for transition must begin by age 16 (in Minnesota, transition planning and services both must begin by age 14 or grade 9). Starting the transition process at this age may seem premature to some because most young people at this point in their lives have little or no idea of what they want to do as an adult. But there are many reasons to begin early.

Simply put, transition planning takes time. It cannot happen overnight. By starting to plan at age 14, or earlier when appropriate, students will have enough time to:

- explore interests and abilities in each transition area
- learn how to tell others what accommodations or modifications they need
- understand how their disability may have an impact on adult life
- develop the necessary skills for adult living before leaving secondary school
- build on the accomplishments and knowledge gained from each preceding year

Although federal law doesn't require transition services to begin until age 16, it may be advisable to start earlier. Students with severe, multiple, or complicated disabilities, in particular, may benefit from transition services early on. For other students whose disabilities make it difficult for them to be successful in a typical school setting or for those at risk of dropping out of school, early transition services could provide the motivation for staying in school.

The decision to provide transition services to students younger than age 16 can be made by the IEP team and must be based on the

student's needs. As a government report noted, the purpose is to "tailor the education to the child; not tailor the child to the education."

Jill and Sam knew their son Sean wanted to be a county sheriff like his favorite uncle. Sean has Down syndrome and his speech is hard to understand. At age 14, Sean's adult employment goal on his transition Individualized Education Program (IEP) read "I want to be a county sheriff."

With this goal in mind, Sean began to learn about becoming a sheriff. During the year, he learned he would have to go to school for three to four years after high school and also learn how to use guns. But Sean didn't like school (it was "hard") and he didn't like guns (they were "scary and could kill people"). He did like being around police cars but not when the sirens were on ("too loud").

When Sean met and admired his uncle's friends, who worked for emergency services and fire stations, he decided he liked fire trucks and ambulances, too. So, at the next IEP transition meeting, Sean's adult employment goal changed to "I will look into jobs that will let me work around police cars, fire trucks, or ambulances."

Learning Options

Members of the transition IEP team include the student and his or her parents, in addition to others who know the student well and any service providers and



others who can help develop a program to meet the student's interests and needs. The IEP team can decide if the student must meet the regular credit requirements for graduation or if the goals on the IEP will be the criteria for awarding the diploma.

The IEP team can decide if the following learning options can be used to satisfy a student's credit needs:

- learning experiences as a volunteer with park and recreation departments, church and religious organizations, 4-H and extension clubs, or health agencies
- independent study

- auditing or taking courses at postsecondary or other learning institutions
- job shadowing or paid work experience
- assisting a teacher in a student's field of interest
- working with a mentor

The student and his or her parents need to be informed that using these learning options to earn a high school diploma may not satisfy the entrance requirements for all colleges or universities. Many students with disabilities who have difficulty conforming to high school schedules and policies benefit from participating in alternative learning options. These individuals may go to a postsecondary school after working for a while and recognizing that they need additional training to be better paid. Entrance requirements at postsecondary educational and vocational training programs are sometimes more flexible for the older, more mature student than for the 18- or 19-year-old high school graduate.

Mark has attention deficit disorder. He is very impulsive and has poor judgment. At age 13 he should have been in the ninth grade, but the school wanted him to repeat eighth grade. In the previous two years he skipped school a lot, rarely turned in his class assignments, and spent most his time at school in detention. His best subject was art. He also loved being part of the senior high swim team in eighth grade, but the school wouldn't allow him on the team any longer because he had failed too many classes. It was pretty clear to his mom, Elaine, that if something didn't change, Mark would drop out of school.

At her request, an IEP meeting was held to develop a program that would focus on Mark's interests and give him a better chance to succeed. The IEP team, along with invited representatives from a community theater group and a YMCA competitive swim team, put together a plan that allowed Mark to earn credits towards his high school diploma through service and community-based learning.

For the theater group, he helped design and build sets for plays, with the director as his mentor. For the YMCA program, Mark could swim competitively and also be an assistant to the swim instructor. Two years later, Mark began to take classes through the district's vocational program to improve his ability to design and build sets.

Students Past Graduation Age

Students who have documented transition needs that have not been addressed through the transition IEP, or who have transition goals that have not been met, are entitled to remain in school through age 21 unless doing so conflicts with state law or practice. These needs must be stated in the IEP and may include community-based instruction, learning experiences, and other adult objectives. All provisions of due process in federal and state laws that protect your rights as a parent and your child's rights (which transfer to him or her at the age of majority) remain in place throughout the transition process.

Many Minnesota school districts permit students who remain in school past their typical graduation date to participate in commencement activities with their peers without receiving their diplomas. These students would then receive their diplomas upon the completion of their transition IEP goals and objectives or when they "age out." "Aging out" occurs when the student is past the age that state law allows students with disabilities to receive special education services. It is important for students and their parents to consider their school district's graduation requirements and practices in the transition process.

It's the Law

Two major pieces of federal legislation define the transition process and services for meeting the needs of youth with disabilities as they prepare to move from high school to community life and employment. These laws are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97) and the Rehabilitation Act and its amendments. In addition, two other federal laws can play a role in the transition process for students with disabilities—the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97)

IDEA '97 describes transition services as a process that promotes the movement from high school to post-high school activities. Transition services must (1) be coordinated and (2) lead to a defined outcome. These coordinated activities must reflect the interests and preferences of the student and must include:

- instruction
- the development of employment and other adult living objectives
- community experiences
- acquisition of daily living skills and a functional vocational evaluation, if appropriate

Post-high school activities

For many students with disabilities, post-high school activities could include postsecondary education, vocational training, employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult

education, adult services, independent living services, or community participation. Transition services are provided while the student is still in high school. Not all students have needs in each transition area, but it's important to consider each area when developing the transition IEP.

Under IDEA, the transition process has two phases: (1) initial transition planning and (2) providing transition services. The first step must begin by age 14, but implementation of necessary services might not start until age 16.

Initial transition planning

When a student with disabilities turns 14, the IEP team must begin planning for the student's future. The IEP must include a statement of the student's likely transition needs and how those needs may determine what high school classes the student takes.

This statement must be updated annually. Some students with disabilities might need classes that concentrate on vocational and functional instruction; others might need classes in math, science, and foreign language to gain admittance to a four-year college or university.

This provision was added to IDEA in 1997 to help focus attention on the student's future and how coursework can be planned for the transition to life after high school.

Providing transition services

When a student begins to receive transition services, the IEP must document the needed services and identify the agencies that are likely to provide services for the student as an adult. The IEP must include a statement that identifies each participating agency's responsibilities and how the agencies will work together. This should all be accomplished before the student leaves school.

Transition services should emphasize the skills needed to live and work in an integrated community setting. Depending on the student's needs, representatives from other agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, county social services, public health, centers for

independent living, and postsecondary institutions may be invited to transition IEP meetings. They and others can be invited to transition IEP meetings by the IEP case manager, the parents, or the student.

To find out about the various adult services available for people with disabilities, contact the parent training and information center in your state. (See pages 59-60 for contact information. Or check with one of the national organizations on pages 61-65.)

Transfer of parental rights

At least one year before the student reaches the age of majority (established by each state), the school must notify the student and his or her parents that the parental rights and procedural safeguards provided under IDEA will transfer to the youth at the age of majority. The IEP must include a statement that the youth and his or her parents have been notified. The transfer of rights does not occur, however, if a guardian or conservator has been appointed to make decisions for the youth. If a guardian or conservator has not been appointed and the school district considers the student unable to make informed educational decisions, it may appoint the parents or another individual to represent the student's educational interests. This is a new provision of IDEA '97. It emphasizes the need to evaluate how the student makes decisions and to determine if someone should be appointed to represent his or her best interests.

Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended through 1998

The Rehabilitation Act and its amendments through 1998 affect transition services in several ways. First, they define transition services the same way as IDEA does. Second, they enhance the transition process by calling for meaningful cooperation and coordination of transition preparation, planning, and services between the schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies. State vocational rehabilitation agencies are required to cooperate with other state and federal agencies that provide services for people who also qualify for services under IDEA.

Although vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are adult service agencies, the 1998 amendments stress the involvement of VR counselors in facilitating and coordinating the transition process with the schools.

The amendments reinforce the principle that individuals with disabilities, regardless of the nature, type, or severity of disability, should have the same opportunity as everyone else to live, work, and socialize in their communities. Implicit in the act are the values of self-determination (self-advocacy) and inclusion. This encourages transition IEPs that reflect the interests and preferences of the students.

Services

Vocational rehabilitation counselors can help students access services such as:

- disability assessments
- vocational evaluation and counseling
- auxiliary aids and services
- vocational training or postsecondary education
- independent living skills training to support an employment goal
- job placement
- follow-up assistance



Eligibility

In determining eligibility, the vocational rehabilitation agency considers a student who is eligible for special education instruction and related services to have a physical or mental impairment. VR will determine whether (1) the impairment results in a substantial barrier to employment and (2) the student requires VR services to gain employment. VR's role is to assist students in planning for the time after high school and to ensure timely provision of VR services.

Section 504

This section of the Rehabilitation Act is very important for students with disabilities who plan to continue their formal education after high school. Section 504 states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

This means that colleges and universities that receive federal money (for example, research grants or student loans or grants) must not discriminate in the recruitment, admission, or treatment of students, and they must ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students with disabilities.

In addition to removing architectural barriers, institutions can ensure accessibility through adaptations in the way specific courses are taught, the use of assistive equipment and support staff, and accommodations in academic requirements. Most colleges and universities require recent documentation (within three years) of a disability in order for students to obtain accommodations or modifications.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1998 includes students with disabilities under the collective term "special populations." School districts that receive Perkins funding through basic state vocational grants, must (1) use the money to improve vocational education programs, and (2) provide for full participation by members of special populations, including students with disabilities.

Each state must ensure that the vocational education system provides equal access to students with disabilities (among others) in recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities, and that a full range of vocational programs is available to students at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

According to the Perkins Act, school districts that conduct vocational education programs and receive federal money must provide the vocational education in the least restrictive environment. Information on affirmative outreach, recruitment efforts, and specific vocational programs must be provided to students and their families by the beginning of ninth grade.

Services

The Perkins Act requires that the supplementary services necessary for students from special populations to succeed in vocational programs be provided based on assessment of their individual needs. These services may include adaptations in curriculum, classrooms, or equipment; supportive personnel; instructional aids and devices; counseling; English language instruction; child care; and special aids. Career and transition services must be provided as well. All students with and without disabilities should have access to services that enable them to complete a vocational program and pursue the widest range of postsecondary opportunities, including higher education and employment.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) is a broad overhaul of the U.S. job-training system. It strives to streamline dozens of individual training programs to provide easier access to services. It replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), among other laws, while still embodying its principles of providing employment-related services and programs to groups who face serious barriers in seeking and gaining employment, including youths and adults with disabilities.

The centerpiece of the WIA is a system of one-stop workforce centers designed to provide job training, education, and employment services at a single neighborhood location. Adults, dislocated workers, and youth ages 14 to 21 can use these centers to receive skills assessment services, information on employment and training opportunities, unemployment services, job search and placement assistance, and up-to-date information on job vacancies.

Eligibility

All adults 18 and older are eligible for core services, including job search and placement assistance, labor market information, initial assessment of skills and needs, information about available services, and some follow-up services to help them keep their jobs. Intensive services for unemployed people who aren't able to find jobs through core services alone will also be available. These include more comprehensive assessments, individual employment plans, group or individual counseling, case management, and short-term prevocational services.

Low-income youth ages 14 to 21 are eligible for services if they also face one or more of the following challenges to successful employment:

- high school dropout
- basic literacy skills needs
- homeless, runaway, or foster child
- pregnant or a parent
- an offender
- need for help in completing an educational program or securing or holding a job

Minnesota Transition Legislation

Minnesota enacted its transition legislation in 1987 and amended it in 1999. The major difference between IDEA and Minnesota transition language is that in Minnesota the transition process (both the planning and the provision of services) starts by age 14 or grade 9. As in IDEA, the areas of assessment and planning must be relevant to the student's needs and may include work, recreation and leisure, home living, community participation, and postsecondary training and learning opportunities.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Although it does not deal specifically with transition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enacted in 1990, prohibits

discrimination against people with disabilities in settings from employment and transportation to state and local government programs, private businesses, and not-for-profit agencies that offer goods and services to the public. The key concepts of the three major titles of the ADA are:

- reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities
- auxiliary aids and services necessary for effective communication and program access
- reasonable modifications of policies, practices, and procedures

Public schools (elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions) are covered under Title II ("public entities") of the ADA. The key provisions of Title II are that public entities must provide program access and it must



be in an integrated setting. Private schools, including elementary, secondary, graduate, and postgraduate programs, are covered under Title III of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination by private entities that offer accommodations, goods, or services to the public. Private schools directly operated by religious institutions, however, are not covered by the ADA.

Laws Working Together

The Americans with Disabilities Act works in conjunction with other federal laws (IDEA '97 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) and state legislation (special education and human rights laws) affecting the education of students with disabilities. Students who meet the criteria for special education services under IDEA are also covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA. Students who do not meet the criteria for special education services under IDEA may still qualify for accommodations or modifications under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA.

Your Child's Needs, Desires, and Dreams

You are the expert on your child. You were his or her first teacher and you know your child's interests, skills, and desires for the future. With this knowledge and understanding, you can help set the tone and direction for your youngster's transition plan. But be careful not to project your dreams or your fears onto your child's future. Sometimes it's hard for parents of children with disabilities to think of their child as an adult. If it's hard for you, then it's probably even harder for your son or daughter to think about the future.

This is the time for you to think about your youngster's unique qualities—his or her strengths, interests, and skills—and how they can be used to help him or her participate fully as an adult in the community. Talk to your child about these things. Share your vision of his or her future in regard to work, education, living arrangements, getting around the community, and enjoying a social life. And, even more important, encourage your youngster to think about these things and to talk about his or her own desires and dreams. Use these dreams to begin planning goals.



Starting Transition Planning

There are many ways to start the transition planning process—for example, “futures planning sessions,” “circle of friends,” or MAPS (making action plans). School districts use a variety of methods to find out how students are functioning at school, at home, and in the

community—through academic tests, career interest inventories or surveys, observations of students in different settings, and questionnaires filled out by parents, employers, or others who know the students. Sometimes it is helpful to use a series of questions in the different transition areas to begin discussions with your child and others about the future. The following questions are a less formal way of getting the discussions started.

Employment (including supported employment) and vocational training

- Do you see your youngster as a worker?
- Does he or she know how to work?
- Does your child do chores at home?
- Has she or he had several work experiences through the school program?
- What kind of jobs has your son or daughter done that were enjoyable?
- Are there jobs your youngster has not done but would like to explore?
- Will your child need training to get a job?
- Will your son or daughter need support to be employed?
- What kind of work is available in the community?

Postsecondary, continuing, and adult education

- Will your child go to college?
- Will it be a two-year or four-year program?
- Does your child know how to find out what high school courses are needed to go to college?
- Would your youngster like to take some community education courses?
- What other kinds of learning opportunities are available in your community?

Independent living

- Where would your youngster like to live?
- Can he or she live alone or is support needed?
- How much support does your child need now?
- What kinds of things can your child do now that are necessary for independent living?
- What residential options are available in the community?
- Could he or she live in a college dormitory?

Transportation

- Will your youngster be able to obtain a driver's license?
- If not, how will he or she travel around the community?
- Is public transportation available? Can your son or daughter use it or is specialized transportation needed?

Recreation and leisure

- What does your child like to do for recreation or during leisure time?
- Does he or she like sports activities either as a participant or an observer?
- Does your child prefer individual or group activities?
- Does your child participate in extracurricular or cocurricular activities at school?
- What kind of social, recreational, and leisure activities are available in your community?

Self-awareness and Self-acceptance

Transition is also a time to help youth understand their disability and how it may affect their adult lives. Many children with disabilities know they have difficulty in school but they don't know why, or they have little knowledge about their disability. They don't

Transition and Beyond

realize that their "difficulty" in school may make it harder to get and keep a job or manage money or live independently.

Parents need to help their children learn more about their disability and to recognize their strengths and limitations. Increased self-awareness helps young adults with disabilities understand and accept their disabilities and become comfortable telling others what accommodations or modifications they need. It takes time and practice to develop these skills.

Self-awareness is developed by learning:

- about the disability and its impact on learning and working
- how to separate from the emotional aspects and handle disability as a fact of life
- how to access and use information and resources.
(Information is power!)

Self-acceptance is developed by knowing:

- what your strengths and limitations are and when to ask for help
- how to put aside things you cannot change
- how to tell someone about the disability and what accommodations or modifications are needed to reduce its impact.
- that choosing to use accommodations or modifications means living, working, and playing to the fullest extent possible in your community

Self-advocacy

Self-awareness and self-acceptance are necessary before a young adult can become an effective self-advocate. Self-advocacy means taking the responsibility for communicating one's needs and desires in a straightforward manner to others. It can be as simple as deciding what to order from a restaurant menu or as complicated as knowing how to use the laws that protect people with disabilities. Students need encouragement to develop decision-making skills and learn how to advocate for themselves.

Participation in a class to develop self-advocacy skills can be written into your student's IEP. Discussion or support groups for students with disabilities, facilitated or led by older students with disabilities, provide other ways of developing self-advocacy skills. Sometimes it is easier for students with disabilities to develop these skills by listening to and talking with older students with disabilities who have "been there"—who have experienced the frustration and anger of having a disability and have learned how to deal with it.

Paul is 16. He has significant learning disabilities in reading and sometimes experiences episodes of depression. He qualifies for special education services under emotional behavior disorder (EBD). Paul has attended IEP meetings for two years but has never spoken out and usually agrees to everything that is suggested.

But he and his parents were becoming frustrated with the lack of understanding and accommodations being offered. Paul wanted to take the auto mechanics course at the vocational college, but the district was reluctant to provide the transportation or pay Paul mileage for one round trip per day. Regular district transportation to the vocational college would get him to class forty-five minutes late. When Paul and his parents received the written IEP in the mail, there was no district commitment to provide transportation.

With his parents' support and his mom's coaching, Paul made daily phone calls to the superintendent until the district agreed to pay him mileage.

Encouraging Independence

Parents need to encourage their child's gradual independence in all areas of their child's life—from decision-making and money management to self-care, everyday living activities, and transportation.

Depending on the severity of the disability, your child may take longer to gain greater or full independence. Each step towards independence, however, means one more thing your youngster can do unassisted and one less thing that needs to be done by someone else. Everyone, even a child with a disability, needs something he or she can do without help.

It can be very hard for parents to hand over to their child the responsibility for making choices, taking risks, and recognizing the positive and negative consequences of their decisions. All parents struggle with this as their children become adults, but it can be especially difficult for parents of children with disabilities. Your role as a parent changes as your child grows up and begins to mature. Instead of being the primary decision-maker, you will provide support and assistance when your youngster has made a choice, whether or not you agree with it. You can serve as a safety net, ready to step in and catch your child if he or she stumbles, before real harm is done.

Anna, 15, is deaf and uses sign language. She is getting better at lip reading but feels more comfortable using sign language or written notes to communicate in public. Her interaction with others is limited to school and family. Anna's parents are not sure if she has skills that would be useful in a job setting.

At the IEP meeting, Jim, the work experience coordinator, asks them to describe a typical day for Anna. Based on Anna's daily activities, Jim identifies these work-related traits and skills:

- organized (gets ready for school very early each morning; turns in homework and big assignments on time)
- punctual (gets up on time for morning activities and to catch bus)
- completes work (turns in homework and big assignments on time)
- asks for help when needed
- works cooperatively with others (tutors other students)
- demonstrates leadership skills (tutors and helps other students)
- takes the initiative when something needs to be done (picks up toys and straightens the house)
- stamina (has a long day at school and still has energy when she gets home)

What's Available Out There

For most families, a public school district has been responsible for providing the services required for your child to become a successful learner. But that changes as your child leaves school. The adult system is very different: instead of one agency, there are many public and private agencies that provide services for adults with disabilities. Moreover, adult service agencies may have different or more restrictive criteria for eligibility than public education services. They also may have long waiting lists and limited or uncertain funding. This means that some young adults leaving school may have to wait until services are available. There is no federal law that requires services for adults with disabilities as IDEA does for children from birth through age 21.

Types of Services

Most states have laws that provide some services for adults with disabilities, and it's important to learn what programs or services are available in your state. Depending on the level of support your child requires or the kind of disability, these services could include:

- vocational rehabilitation
- residential services
- training programs or postsecondary education
- financial assistance
- health care
- transportation
- recreation and leisure activities

In addition, you and your youngster need to think about other adult responsibilities, including voting in elections, getting things repaired, making appointments for services (doctors or dentists, photographers,

hair stylists, etc.), using bank services, and arranging for utilities (telephone, electrical, gas, and water) to be turned on for an apartment or house.

Not all students with disabilities need assistance in each of these areas as an adult, nor do these areas encompass all the everyday activities of adults. But when you reflect on your discussions about your child's dreams for the future, you may have a good idea of the types of services or level of support your child might need as an adult.

As your child moves closer to exiting the school program, it becomes more important to make sure that adult service providers are invited to the IEP meetings and that formal links with those providers are established. For students whose disabilities create a substantial barrier to employment and who need additional services to prepare for and find employment as well as to stay employed, it is essential to have county social service and vocational rehabilitation representatives at the transition IEP meetings.

Case Management

Families must apply to county social services to determine eligibility for case management services. In Minnesota, case management services are provided for individuals who have:

- mental retardation (an IQ of 70 or below) or related conditions (such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, Prader-Willi syndrome, or other conditions that substantially limit major life activities)
- a traumatic brain injury
- severe and persistent mental illness

In Minnesota, case management is provided through an Individual Service Plan (ISP). Services may include:

- employment (day training and habilitation, extended employment, or supported employment)
- housing (semi-independent living services, group homes, or adult foster care)

- health care, personal care services, and occupational, physical, or speech therapies
- transportation

Vocational Rehabilitation

In some states, one agency provides vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. In Minnesota, two agencies provide services. State Services for the Blind (SSB) serves individuals who are blind or visually impaired regardless of other disabilities they may have. Rehabilitation Services (RS) serves all others with disabilities. To find out about vocational rehabilitation services in your state, look in the government pages of the telephone book for a vocational rehabilitation listing. The National Rehabilitation Center can also refer you to your state agency. Call 1-800-346-2742.

Eligibility

As with county social services, your youngster's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services must be determined through an application process. In some states, having an IEP is sufficient evidence for eligibility based on disability. When this is the case, the application process determines what benefits and services the student needs to become employed.

The Rehabilitation Act as amended in 1998 assumes that a person with a disability, no matter how significant, is able to work. If the agency denies services saying that your child is unemployable, it must have strong and clear evidence that your child cannot work.

When a state is unable to serve everyone who is eligible for vocational rehabilitation, people with the most significant disabilities receive services first. This is called *order of selection*. People who are eligible but who have less severe disabilities may sometimes be put on a waiting list for services.

Developing a plan

If your child is eligible for vocational services, an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) will be developed jointly by a vocational rehabilitation counselor and your son or daughter, with input from you and others who know the impact your child's disability will have on employment. The IPE must reflect your youngster's interests and needs regarding employment goals and identify who is responsible for carrying out the plan. Some of the services that could be included on an IPE include rehabilitation technology, payment for expenses to attend a college or job training program, and job coaching.

The local office of the state vocational agency and a county social service department usually contract with an adult service agency to carry out the plans developed through the IPE and the ISP. It is important to visit and evaluate the different agencies that could provide employment or residential services for your son or daughter. There needs to be a good fit among the agency providing services and its staff, your child, and your family's expectations and values.

Postsecondary Education

Consider what support a student with disabilities might need when going to college immediately after high school. Think about the needs any students have when leaving home for the first time and going to college. Chances are that students with disabilities will have those same needs, plus a few more related to the disability.

Some of those needs can be taken care of easily. For example, a student can choose to live in a dormitory and sign up for a campus meal plan, thereby eliminating the need for an apartment and having to pay bills, find roommates, and prepare meals. Campus bookstores can bill you directly for books and other supplies your student purchases.

School visits

As students narrow down their list of schools, they should visit the campuses they are interested in to check support services, examine program accessibility, and ask questions about specific programs. Students should understand their disability and be able to explain it to someone else. To assist college support staff in planning

an academic program and reasonable accommodations for the disability, the student should be prepared to provide recent documentation (within three years) of the disability, a list of accommodations that have been used successfully, new assessment results, medication changes, and the most recent IEP.

Challenges of college life

Understanding the obstacles and pitfalls of not disclosing a disability is important for students whose disabilities may not be obvious. Students with medical conditions, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, or mental health issues, as well as those who are hard of hearing or have limited vision, sometimes feel uncomfortable disclosing their disabilities to college staff or classmates.

Students who go away to college or live away from the family home while attending college assume many responsibilities they previously shared with others. College students are expected to manage their school time independently and responsibly—finding course books and materials, attending classes, completing assignments, etc. At the same time, they must also navigate adult life outside the classroom—meeting new people, going to social events, and dealing with dorm or apartment life, noise, roommates, laundry, college food, shopping, and being away from home and daily supervision. The transition to college has its ups and downs for students without disabilities, but for students with disabilities it can be even bumpier.

Accommodations

Students who need books and other course materials in an alternative format (on tape, large print, or Braille) should request these accommodations early enough so that the material is ready when classes begin. Students with disabilities must be knowledgeable about their disabilities and the accommodations that work best for them, because they will have to discuss this with their instructors and negotiate what accommodations will be used in each class. Students should do this at the beginning of each school term

rather than waiting until they find it difficult to complete the coursework or until they prepare for final exams.

In addition to dealing with the usual ups and downs of college life, students with disabilities need to know the laws that protect them from discrimination because of their disabilities, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. They also need to know what to do if they feel they have been treated unfairly. Working with the college disabilities services office can be helpful.

Sharon, a first-year college student, has learning disabilities that affect her ability to read and write. In high school all her books were on tape; she took her exams separately and was allowed extra time to complete them. During finals week, she had one exam a day instead of two or three as other students did.

Sharon and her parents provided documentation to the college about the modifications that worked for her in high school. She also informed her teachers about her special needs. However, at mid-semester, two professors wanted her to take the exams with the other students. She didn't want to be singled out, and so she reluctantly agreed. Unfortunately, she received an F and a D, and her professors refused to let her retake the exams, saying it would be unfair to the others.

Sharon then met with the supervisor of support services, where she presented a summary of the steps taken to document her learning disabilities and the need for accommodations. She asked that the summary be shared with the college's ADA/504 Compliance Officer and that college professors be advised and trained on their obligations under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

As a result, she was allowed to retake the mid-semester exams with appropriate accommodations. This time she did much better.

Supplemental Security Income

A person's ability to work or the length of time spent working may be affected by a disability. Students with disabilities should apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI is a program run by Social Security for people who are age 65 and over or blind or who have a disability and limited assets. To qualify for SSI, a person

must have a disability that will prevent him or her from working for at least a year, or that will result in death. People who qualify for SSI are usually eligible for food stamps, Medicaid, and low-income housing. Some states add to the federal SSI payments, and others administer their own supplement. To apply for SSI and to inquire if your state has a supplemental income program, call 1-800-772-1213 to set up an appointment with a Social Security representative. If SSI benefits are denied, the applicant and his or her representative or advocate should always ask about the appeal process and appeal the decision.

Work incentives

Most people would rather work than try to live on disability benefits. Certain regulations of the SSI law encourage people with disabilities to work. These special rules are called "work incentives." Generally speaking, as a person's income increases, the SSI benefits decrease. Disability-related work expenses can be deducted from one's earnings before the SSI benefit is determined. These expenses include items such as wheelchairs, respirators, attendant care services, an interpreter for the deaf, drug expenses or medical services to control a disability, and certain work-related equipment (a one-handed typewriter, Braille devices, etc.). Each deduction for disability-related work expense must be approved by Social Security.

Another work incentive is called PASS (Plans for Achieving Self-Support). PASS allows income and/or other resources to pay for special training, education, work-related equipment to help a person achieve a specific work goal.

SSI cash may be very important during the transition years. It may provide the crucial help needed for someone with a disability to achieve a higher income and more independence in the long run. Even if a person eventually earns an income that eliminates SSI cash benefits, federal legislation makes it possible to keep Medicaid health coverage.



Health Care

There are no easy answers when it comes to health care for young adults with disabilities. Getting coverage is complicated because our country's health care system is based in large part on employer-based insurance plans. Many young adults with disabilities face barriers to work, many have preexisting medical conditions or ongoing health needs, and many fall through the cracks in the system. Most families have to work hard to obtain health insurance for young adult children who have disabilities.

Maintaining uninterrupted coverage is important, and recent federal legislation on health care plan portability has made it possible for parents to switch employers without losing health coverage for their dependants with disabilities.

There are many avenues to explore for health care coverage, but the fees may be quite high.

Maintaining coverage on a family policy

Many families keep their adult child on their family insurance plan as long as possible. You'll want to read your policy carefully or talk with a claims representative to find out when your son or daughter may no longer be eligible for coverage. Some plans cover dependent children to age 18, others offer coverage to age 21. Be sure to ask about any time lines that need to be met in order to maintain coverage.

If your son or daughter enrolls full-time in college or vocational school or remains in high school after age 18, you may be able to continue current health coverage. Most health insurance companies maintain their coverage while your child is in school or until he or she turns 22 or 23.

If your son or daughter does not continue in school, you have the option to keep him or her on your insurance policy through purchasing a COBRA continuation policy through your employer. While you'll have to pay the full cost of the insurance premium under



COBRA, this option has two advantages: the coverage does not include an exclusion clause for preexisting conditions, and it allows your child to continue seeing the same medical professionals. Unfortunately, COBRA coverage is limited to 18 to 36 months.

Some states require health insurance plans to continue coverage for young adults with disabilities if they are unable to obtain self-sustaining employment because of physical or mental disability. This means your child can continue on your policy as long as you are insured. Call your state insurance commissioner's office to find out the laws in your state.

Student insurance

If your son or daughter is in college, even part time, look into the option of purchasing student health insurance. This is different from student health services. It sometimes contains an exclusion or a waiting period of up to one year for coverage on preexisting conditions. Other health care options include:

- Contact a large health maintenance organization about its open-enrollment period. Coverage or treatment associated with a preexisting condition may be limited.
- Check to see if your state has high-risk insurance pools. In state insurance plans, eligibility for this type of coverage usually depends on being turned down by several insurance companies. You may be asked to pay very high premiums. Coverage may include a waiting period for preexisting conditions.
- Apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If you qualify, you'll also qualify for Medical Assistance or Medicaid.

To find out more about health care options in your state, contact the office of your state insurance commissioner. Minnesota's publicly funded health care programs include:

- **Medical Assistance (MA)**—Minnesota's Medicaid program, funded jointly by the state and federal governments, helps low-income senior citizens, children, families, and people with disabilities pay for their medical care.

- **General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)**—This state-funded program helps low-income Minnesotans who don't qualify for MA or other health care assistance programs to pay for their medical care.
- **MinnesotaCare**—This state-subsidized health insurance program covers working Minnesotans who don't have access to affordable health care coverage. There are no health condition barriers, and coverage includes medical care (clinic and hospital), dental care, mental health and chemical dependency services, and prescription drugs. Enrollees pay premiums on a sliding-fee scale, based on family size and income. The average MinnesotaCare premium for an adult in 1999 was \$18 a month.

Health care for Minnesota's programs is provided by both fee-for-service medical providers and managed care plans. To get more information or to apply for MA, GMAC, or MinnesotaCare contact your county's human services agency. You can also get a MinnesotaCare application by calling 1-800-657-3672 or 1-800-627-3529 (TTY). You can apply for any of these programs even if you are not sure you are eligible.

Transportation

Knowing how to drive or ride a bus can make it easier to hold a job, go to school, and have fun. Transportation is a problem for many young adults with disabilities. If your child's disability does not prevent him or her from driving, encourage your child to take a driver education class. In Minnesota, youth between the ages of 16 and 18 have to take a driver education class with behind-the-wheel training and pass the state driving tests (permit and road) to have a license. A driver education program is not required if your child is over 18.

Driver education programs

Some school districts offer driver education classes and behind-the-wheel training and some offer only the driver education class. If your school district offers driver education, it must make the classes accessible to your son or daughter, even if special services are needed.

For students whose physical disabilities require the use of hand controls to drive, it might be easier and more cost-effective for the school district to contract with another driver education program to teach those students. There are commercial driver education training programs for students whose schools do not offer the program or for others who are out of school. Sometimes vocational rehabilitation counselors can help locate driver training programs for youth with disabilities.

In Minnesota, Courage Center (3915 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422, 612-588-0811 or TTY 612-520-0410) offers specialized driver training programs for individuals with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and other learning problems. Individuals with disabilities can contact Courage Center for a driver assessment to determine whether they may have the capacity to drive a motor vehicle. For specialized driver training programs in other states, contact the Independent Living Program, a program within the state office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Susan, who has developmental disabilities, will soon graduate from high school. She enjoys the social events at her school, but her mother, Betty, wondered if there would be any organized social opportunities for Susan after she left high school.

Betty raised this issue at a community transition committee meeting and volunteered to find out more about the need for and availability of organized leisure activities. Although she found other interested families, she also found that there were very few organized activities for young adults with developmental disabilities.

Several parents decided to initiate activities before their children graduated. One parent contacted community education to arrange a meeting place. Another identified young adults who wanted to participate in leisure activities. The young adults themselves began to choose activities such as going out to eat, playing board games, and attending the community theater.

Betty then convinced the transition committee to work with the community education program to supervise the monthly events.

Afterwards, Betty and the other parents felt good. With the help of the transition committee, they had been able to arrange leisure activities for their young adults at very little cost.

Bus systems

For young adults with disabilities that prevent them from driving, the availability of transportation may dictate where they live, work, or play. Options increase dramatically in communities with a public transportation system and a special bus system for riders with disabilities.

Although bus systems increase mobility and choices, vulnerability issues need to be addressed for many people with disabilities. If your son or daughter could use some help or training on using the bus system, the Independent Living Centers and the Developmental Disabilities Council in your state can supplement school programs.

Recreation and Leisure Activities

Recreation and leisure activities are an important part of people's lives. It is particularly important to address this area in transition planning because it will be more difficult to do when your son or daughter is out of school. Think about the activities your child enjoys that involve interactions with other people. Are any of them offered at school, as part of the school program, or as an after-school activity? Picture lifelong activities, and plan how your son or daughter could be included in those activities now, while still in school. Noncompetitive lifelong activities offered in many schools include drama, music, and environmental groups; school yearbook or newspaper; stamp, chess, or computer clubs; student community service projects; and organizations such as Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD).

Community education programs

Community education programs offer the opportunity not only to learn a new skill but also to meet people and make new friends. Community education programs often offer classes or socialization opportunities that may not be available in a high school setting. Some programs offer day trips to attend professional sporting events, concerts, and theater events outside the local area.

Community parks and recreation programs and special interest groups

Community recreation programs and special interest groups offer activities such as fishing, archery, quilting, watercolor, and pottery. They can be wonderful resources for becoming involved with other people in your community. Many people don't think of these programs as resources for people with disabilities, but they should. In most cases, even if a group has no participants with disabilities, people are willing to share their interests and teach the skills to others. Sometimes all it takes to participate in leisure or recreational activities is to show an interest in becoming involved.

If Your Child "Falls Through the Cracks"

Students who do not have significant disabilities and do not qualify for many of the services in the existing adult system can find transition planning particularly difficult. But they still need help or support services. These students are often described as "falling through the cracks" and "not fitting into the system." On one hand, they are not able to manage age-related expectations; on the other, they do not need the extensive and constant support offered by programs for people with more significant disabilities. Nevertheless, these students may need services and support for a number of years after they leave school.

Many of these students had IEPs or Section 504 plans and were mainstreamed in high school. Some graduated with their age mates. Others dropped out or tried alternative learning programs without success. Their goals for adult life may be unrealistic, given their inconsistent academic skill development and behaviors. The time and effort it takes them to learn a new skill, whether academic, social, or vocational, is usually much greater than for others the same age. In general, they act younger than their age.



Mike graduated from high school two years ago and, until recently, he worked for an electronics store. In high school he experienced some depression and was on an IEP that addressed his medication needs and school absences, but unfortunately did not address the transition issue of how depression might affect his ability to work. About six months ago he began having emotional problems at home and at work, but refused to see his doctor. One day at work he totally lost control, snapping at customers, yelling at his boss, and walking off the job. He later found out that he had been fired for insubordination.

Mike's mom called Jim, Mike's work experience teacher, who had helped Mike get his job. Jim convinced Mike to see his doctor, and his medication was changed. Jim also encouraged Mike to apply for vocational rehabilitation services. Mike was qualified for services because he had had an IEP in school and has a disability that makes it hard for him to be employed. The VR counselor, together with Mike, Jim, and Mike's parents, developed an Individual Plan for Employment. This plan helped Mike return to school to become certified in electronic installation. After he completes the program, the VR counselor and the job placement office at the technical program will work together to get Mike a new job.

Program needs

Many young adults benefit from programs that provide supervision with a gradual increase in personal responsibilities and programs that offer structured or planned activities for social and educational development. Others may need multiple and varied approaches to help them learn to manage their lives and develop skills that lead to employment, friendships, and satisfactory living arrangements. They also need enthusiastic "cheerleaders" and a great deal of encouragement to continue their skill development, as well as much recognition and applause for their progress.

Unfortunately, programs and services available to these students and their families are relatively few and scattered across the country. Many have been parent-initiated and use various resources, such as a combination of public and private funding and collaboration with existing services or programs. The greatest demand is for programs

that provide residential training and continuing education options. The affordability and effectiveness of these programs often dictate how long these programs remain in operation.

Home-based transition plan

What if the program that best meets the needs of your child is halfway across the country and unaffordable? If this is the reality of your situation and your son or daughter will continue to live at home immediately after high school, you may want to consider a "home-based transition plan." This is a plan you write yourself. It clearly identifies the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of the parents, the child, and others (family members, friends, personal networks, service providers, etc.). Components of this plan should include job or education options and slowly increasing responsibilities for independent living activities, community participation, and recreation and leisure. The plan needs to build on the skills and strengths developed in the school-based transition plan.

There are challenges in implementing a home-based transition plan. Some parents are afraid of the "disasters" that may await children who try to make it on their own. Others find it difficult to increase their son's or daughter's responsibility and decrease dependence when their youngster likes things just the way they are. These and other challenges make it imperative to involve others when beginning a home-based transition plan.

Some resources to consider when thinking about starting a home-based transition plan are:

- **Community colleges and adult or community education programs.** Many have services to meet the needs of special students and are more flexible than larger four-year institutions. Auditing classes may be an option.
- **Vocational rehabilitation services.** Even if your child is not eligible for services, the counselor may be helpful in identifying public or private resources for work-related training, transportation, and residential options.

- **Family, work, volunteer, and social networks.** People who know you and your son or daughter may be good sources for employment leads and for expanding and learning new social and leisure skills. They can also affirm the growth and progress your child makes.
- **Networking with other families whose children have similar special needs.** By joining with others who could benefit from similar services and programs, you gain power, knowledge, and influence.
- **Parent training and information centers, disability or advocacy organizations, community-based parent programs, and information and referral systems.** These groups usually know what's happening in your community. Sometimes it helps to share ideas and ask them for assistance when tackling problems.
- **Networking with school staff.** Don't forget to keep in touch with school staff. Their knowledge usually extends beyond the school building, and they may know of a specific program that is appropriate for your child.

By expanding the number of advisors, teachers, and contributors to a home-based transition plan, your son or daughter is more likely to succeed at meeting individual goals. Young adults tend to accept "real world" messages more easily if they don't come from their parents.

Navigating the System

As you seek to help your son or daughter become a participating member of the community, you are bound to encounter some roadblocks. Exploring adult programs and services for your youngster can be frustrating. It doesn't take long to learn that eligibility for special education services does not automatically lead to individualized services in the adult system.

The experience you gained during your child's early years will serve you well at this time. Parents of children with physical, mental, learning, and emotional disabilities learn early in their child's life to:

- connect with other parents
- ask many questions
- independently seek additional resources or services
- advocate for changes in service systems to better meet the needs of their children

These are strategies you need to continue using as you deal with the adult system. These strategies and others listed below will help make it easier for you to find your way through the system and make it work for your child—and others.

Collaborating with Agencies

In navigating the adult system of programs and services for people with disabilities, you will need to collaborate with a number of different agencies. Successful collaborations among parents, family members, individuals with disabilities, and community service representatives are ones that:

- encourage and demonstrate respectful communication of ideas, resources, and services between individuals and agencies
- focus on strengths, abilities, and potential rather than deficits

Transition and Beyond

- value self-awareness and personal growth
- demonstrate cooperation, flexibility, and openness to new solutions
- maintain focus on achieving a common goal

Caroline is 16 years old and has cerebral palsy. She uses a communication board for speech. She can use a computer and would like to work in an office doing data entry. However, using a communication board at work could be difficult because it requires people to gather around the board to talk. It is also difficult to use in many social situations or when using public or private transportation.

Caroline's transition needs were discussed at her IEP meeting. One suggestion was for a portable augmentative communication system with a keypad and voice output. Unfortunately, this system is very expensive. Representatives from the school district, vocational rehabilitation, and the county agreed at the IEP meeting to explore sharing the cost, even though interagency funding of assistive technology had not been done before. A communication system was leased for a trial period of two months.

Caroline loved the new system. It was easy to carry when walking. She became more confident about participating in mainstream classes now that she could "speak up." Caroline now had lunch in the cafeteria with her friends instead of alone in the classroom. At the end of the trial period, all agreed that the new system would increase Caroline's options in vocational choices and community participation. At the IEP meeting, the team agreed that the district would purchase the system and bill vocational rehabilitation and the county for their portions of the costs.

Comparison of adult and school systems

Working with adult programs and service systems is quite different from working with public education systems, primarily because the K-12 education system is considered an entitlement program while the adult system determines services through eligibility criteria. However, the two systems are more alike than different. Both systems must comply with state and federal laws, and

sometimes those laws make it hard to be creative and truly individualize the services. Positive outcomes in both systems are achieved when individuals work together toward a common goal. Effective communication skills and negotiation strategies are useful in both public school settings and adult program and service settings.

Chris has mild mental retardation. As he approached graduation, his transition team worked on developing an IEP. Chris had three work experiences in the transition program and decided he liked the food service industry best. A job coach supported Chris when he worked, but all agreed that once he became familiar with the job and established a routine, he wouldn't need a job coach.

When it was time to find a post-graduation agency to work with Chris on his job skills and placement, there was only one in the area—a sheltered workshop. Its policy was to have all new people in their food service program work at the workshop cafeteria for a year before being considered for a job in the community.

This was unacceptable to Chris and his parents, who saw it as a step backward. The rehabilitation counselor agreed and gave them the name of a different agency in a nearby community.

Through networking, Chris's parents knew of other young adults with disabilities who, like Chris, wanted to work in, rather than separately from, the community. With this information, they were able to convince the agency to begin a program in their community.

Visiting agencies

Parents and family members who have legal decision-making authority (guardians or conservators) have the responsibility to visit agencies that provide adult services and programs to determine which provider(s) will best meet the need for support as well as help the young adult achieve his or her dreams and desires. The young adult should participate in this decision as well. Representatives from all agencies that might have a role in providing a program for your son or daughter need to participate in the development of the program and be a part of the decision-making process.

Two key points to remember when working with adult agencies or services are: (1) while one adult agency or system may be the lead

agency, the responsibility to the person receiving services usually extends beyond that one agency or system and involves others as well, and (2) the available options or strategies usually offered by agencies do not always match parents' expectations.

Communication skills

This is the time when communication skills will be especially helpful in developing a program suited to your son or daughter. Effective communication and negotiation skills include:

- expressing ideas clearly and directly
- treating professionals like partners
- documenting what your child needs and not feeling guilty
- listening carefully to what is said and not thinking ahead to your next response
- maintaining focus on the issue and not on personalities
- analyzing the problem and being prepared to compromise
- knowing your rights and being persistent
- being positive about the outcome and thanking those who help achieve it



Support Networks

As stated earlier, transition is stressful and not at all easy. Your child is excited and scared at the same time, and eager to move on and show that he or she is an adult and can do things without your presence or help. Your young adult really doesn't know what the future holds but is ready to embrace it wholeheartedly.

Meanwhile, you are facing your own transition—perhaps to middle age or an empty nest. Your parents may be aging and your role as caregiver may be changing but not ending. As much as you have watched over and encouraged your child to grow, now that he

or she is almost an adult, you're not sure you want it. Because of the disability and vulnerability issues, you're worried about your youngster's future.

Bob is 19 years old and has cerebral palsy that affects his walking, arms, hands, and speech. He had several work experiences through the school program and was a good worker although he needed to be reminded to stay on task. Bob can only work for about three hours before becoming very tired.

Through membership in a local service club, Bob's dad knew the manager of the local bank and asked him to create a two- to three-hour job for Bob. The job included putting coins into the coin sorter, putting the packaged coins into bags for storage, shredding sensitive documents, and sorting the mail. Bob needed a job coach to help him learn the duties and to remind him to stay on task.

Working together, the school's work experience coordinator and the vocational rehabilitation counselor identified assistive technology to help Bob do the job. The school paid for the job coaching during the school year and rehabilitation services paid for it during school vacations. After Bob graduated, he continued working for the bank.

Addressing your fears

These fears and concerns need to be acknowledged and addressed. By separating your fears—the ones about your child and the ones about yourself—you'll find them easier to handle. However, trying to do everything alone is hard. You need to take care of yourself during this transition process, for it may continue for some time. A support network can provide you with the help you need.

Your network may include immediate and extended family members, other parents of children with disabilities, and friends and acquaintances from your neighborhood, work, professional, religious, social, recreational, or volunteer activities. Not only can your family and friends provide support during this time, but they can celebrate your child's journey into adulthood and your accomplishments as a parent.

Ways support networks help

These networks of family and friends can be a wonderful source of ideas or solutions to some of the unsettling transition issues or concerns. Sharing your child's story or issues that are being addressed by the IEP transition team with people in your networks can help clarify the issues and may lead to solutions.

Most people don't mind being asked for a favor, especially when it's helpful to someone they know. To paraphrase the parent of a young adult with significant disabilities, "The more people in the community who know my son and the more people looking out for him, the safer he's going to be!"

Here are some examples of how personal networks can address transition concerns:

- If your community has few job openings, you might be able to find your son or daughter some volunteer job experience through a business or professional relationship. Sometimes, nonpaying job experiences lead to a paying job later.
- If your daughter wants to learn how to knit and you are all thumbs, you might connect her with your aunt or cousin who loves to knit.
- You might ask someone from your church or synagogue to look out for your youngster on a bus trip to hear a country music performer your youngster appreciates.

Disability or advocacy organizations can also offer good resources and support.

Benefits of networking

Connecting with other parents through formal and informal networks has many benefits:

- It helps families feel less isolated by providing opportunities to share experiences and exchange ideas without blame or judgment.
- It strengthens the "parents helping parents" foundation of the parent center movement and involvement.

- It helps parents see themselves as advocates for the improvement of programs and services for all children and young adults with disabilities.

Advocacy

The school services and programs that help your son or daughter develop skills to live, work, and play in your community are in place because of other parents who came before you. Those parents and family members found the system lacking and worked hard to develop those services and programs to help their children with special needs. As you prepare yourself and your child to make the transition from school life to adult life, you can help make this journey a little less bumpy for those who follow in your footsteps.

Most parents start out as personal advocates to overcome barriers or make changes specifically for their child. Many parents use their successful experiences as a personal advocate to move to public advocacy and press for program improvements that would benefit more children. They recognize that they can never do or accomplish as much alone as they can when working with others. Some parents seem to move easily between personal and public advocacy. At times you may need to take a break to avoid burnout and re-energize your efforts.

Advocating in the adult system

It is essential for parents, family members, and young adults with disabilities to be advocates for improvements not only in transition services but in the adult system as well. While school districts may have the primary responsibility for providing transition services and programs, several other adult agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation, need to assume some transition responsibilities. It takes time and effort to advocate across the boundaries between agencies and press for interagency sharing of programmatic, human, and financial resources. It is a necessary effort.

Continuity

Because systems change only occurs over a period of years, it is important to maintain a continuity of effort. You need to share your transition knowledge and experiences with parents whose children are beginning the transition process so that they can continue the advocacy efforts.

By planning for succession, you will be doing your part to make sure there is continued parental involvement in the development of transition programs and services. Some ideas on planning for succession include:

- Advise other parents just beginning the transition process by sharing your experiences at meetings or through telephone calls, or writing an article for a disability or advocacy organization newsletter.
- Mentor a replacement for membership on a committee or board overseeing transition or adult services. Attend meetings together until the parent feels prepared.
- Share your knowledge and experiences with a disability or advocacy organization so that it may advocate for improvements in services.

Serving on Advisory Committees

There are many ways parents, family members, or young adults with disabilities can serve as advocates regarding transition and adult services. Other than advocating on a personal level, most methods include serving on committees or boards.

Many of the laws related to disability issues now require representation by parents or individuals with disabilities on advisory committees. In addition, programs and organizations serving children or adults with disabilities frequently have parents serving on their advisory panels even though they are not mandated by law.

Possible barriers

Sometimes parents feel that there are barriers to their involvement and active participation on committees, but there are usually ways to overcome these obstacles. For example:

- **Barrier:** The expectation that a parent of someone with a disability represents all parents and all disability concerns.

Solution: Advocate to increase the number of parents on the committee.

- **Barrier:** Unfamiliarity with the language or jargon used by others on the committee.

Solution: Ask for an explanation of abbreviations or other terms.

- **Barrier:** A disregard for the parent's opinions (e.g., being asked for ideas and recommendations but not having them discussed or considered for implementation).

Solution: Keep a record of meetings and actions taken by the committee in order to review whether they reflect input from all committee members.

- **Barrier:** Frustration with a system that is resistant to change and overly concerned with the process of how things are done rather than with outcomes.

Solution: Identify annual goals and work plans for the committee. Focus committee efforts on something that everyone agrees needs to be changed.

Transition committees

Transition legislation in some states calls for transition committees to be established. They may be operated on a statewide, regional, or local basis. In Minnesota, each school district, group of districts, or special education cooperative is required to establish community transition interagency committees (CTICs).

The main purpose is to:

- examine a community's transition services
- make recommendations to improve those services
- promote an interagency team approach to address the present and future transition needs of youth with disabilities

Legislatively, CTIC membership requires the participation of parents of children with disabilities and youth with disabilities who have used transition services. If your state has transition legislation that calls for transition committees, call your school district to find out when and where they meet, and who serves on them.

Minnesota's experience with transition committees shows that most CTICs meet during the workday because most of the members attend the meetings as part of their job duties. This makes it difficult for parents to participate, particularly if they are employed outside the home, have other younger children and no child care, or have no regular transportation. A solution to this problem has been to create a CTIC subcommittee whose membership is mostly parents. A parent connection subcommittee can set its own meeting times and agenda. Parents use these meetings to:

- learn more about their community's transition and adult services or programs
- provide comment and direction to the CTIC as a whole regarding the needs of young adults with disabilities and whether or not current programs meet their needs
- share their transition experiences and ideas that could help other families

This is a good solution if parents are unable to attend daytime meetings. It also eliminates some of the other barriers to parent involvement and active participation on committees. If a parent subcommittee is not an option, parents can ask the CTIC to conduct regular focus groups or surveys as a way of increasing input from parents, family members, and youth with disabilities. Alternating daytime and evening CTIC meetings is another way to encourage parent involvement.

Special education advisory councils

IDEA requires each state to have an advisory panel to provide policy guidance regarding special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. Panel membership includes individuals with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, teachers, state and local education officials, administrators of programs for children with disabilities, and representatives from institutions of higher learning (teacher preparation programs), juvenile and adult corrections agencies, private and public charter schools, other state agencies involved with the financing or delivery of related services, and vocational, community, or business organizations concerned with transition services. IDEA '97 clarifies that a majority of the members of this panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. In order to ensure statewide representation, some states may use representatives selected from congressional districts in addition to appointing members at large.

School district committees

School districts may have a local committee like the one that operates at the state level and is required by federal law. Other local district committees regarding school-based improvement plans (improving educational and transitional results for all children) and coordinated service systems (working with other agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, county social services, or Social Security to improve student outcomes) must include parents of children and youth with disabilities.

Community education programs

Some school districts provide community education programs specifically for individuals with disabilities. Most of these programs are guided by advisory councils or committees that could benefit from the expertise of people with disabilities and their parents or representatives. Community education programs are a great way to provide continuing education and social opportunities for youth with disabilities.

State rehabilitation advisory councils

The federal Rehabilitation Act requires states to establish an advisory council. The purpose of the council is to review, analyze, and advise the state rehabilitation unit regarding the design, delivery, and effectiveness of its services, and coordinate with other councils within the state, including the Statewide Independent Living Council, the State Planning Council, and the State Mental Health Planning Council.

Membership on the council includes at least one representative each from:

- the Statewide Independent Living Council
- a parent training and information center
- the client assistance program
- community rehabilitation program service providers
- at least four representatives of disability advocacy groups
- at least one vocational rehabilitation counselor
- current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services

Depending on the state legislation regarding vocational rehabilitation, some regional vocational rehabilitation offices have followed best-practice models and established local advisory councils.

Developmental Disabilities Council

Authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 1994, this council's purpose is to promote, through systematic change, capacity-building, and advocacy activities, a comprehensive system of services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. Membership on the council includes people with disabilities; their parents or representatives; and representatives of the rehabilitation and education agencies, Social Security agency, the university-affiliated program in the state, and the protection and advocacy

system. At least 50 percent of the council membership must be individuals with disabilities, their parents, or a representative, and of that 50 percent, at least one-third must represent individuals with developmental disabilities. Members of the council are appointed by the governor and, to the extent possible, must be geographically representative of the state and its ethnic diversity.

Private Industry Council (PIC)

This council was established by the Job Training Partnership Act and continues now through the Workforce Investment Act.

Its purposes are to:

- (1) plan and oversee programs to recruit, train, and place economically disadvantaged people in jobs
- (2) evaluate local training needs
- (3) sponsor summer job training programs for disadvantaged youth and other initiatives to address the community's needs to build a skilled workforce

PIC membership includes representatives from public and private business, public education, organized labor, community organizations, economic development organizations, and state and local governmental agencies. It is important to make sure that there are advocates or community organizations that represent youth and adults with disabilities on PICs. The job training office in each state should have information concerning PICs and their membership lists.

Disability or advocacy organizations

Many of the larger organizations that advocate for or represent the interests of people with disabilities have state offices and some have regional or local offices throughout a state. Serving on local committees or advisory boards is a good way for individuals with disabilities and their parents or representatives to learn and practice their advocacy skills. It is also a good way to make sure that the advocacy or disability organization is knowledgeable about issues relating to transition. In many instances, disability and advocacy

organizations are asked to send representatives to committees or task forces addressing services or programs for individuals with disabilities.

Other local programs

Many programs and services for individuals with disabilities receive some funding from county social service or human service departments. Some of these programs and services have advisory committees that make recommendations to the county commissioners or board of supervisors for action. Public and private nonprofit and for-profit organizations that provide employment, residential, recreational, or social programs usually have boards of directors that set the direction and policy for the organization. Some of these programs may have been started by parents for their own children with disabilities. Most of them still rely on and value the knowledge and ideas of parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities. They need you!

A Final Word

As you deal with the transition process, keep in mind that all your efforts as a parent have helped prepare your child for this move. With your help and guidance, your child has become more independent. Your role now is to help your child to weigh the consequences of different choices and to think about how those decisions might affect his or her future. Your child is now a young adult and has developed skills to let others know his or her preferences and needs.

In your role as parent and advocate, you help shape your youngster's future by planning a program to help him or her become a participating member of the community. As you go through this time of change, you will find many challenges—some exciting, some frustrating. Do not allow the problems to steal this opportunity to celebrate the successes in your child's life. Be realistic about potential problems and optimistic about finding solutions. Don't forget that this is what you have been working for as a parent.

Your child's journey towards adulthood and independence is not finished, just as your role as a parent has not ended. Each step of this journey involves you and your child with disabilities, focusing on strengths, identifying needs, and figuring out how to move ahead. This is a journey made together, sharing information and guiding each other with love.



Laws: Transition-Related Excerpts

Federal Legislation

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

§300.29 Transition services

- (a) As used in this part, transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that—
 - (1) Is designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
 - (2) Is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and
 - (3) Includes—
 - (i) Instruction;
 - (ii) Related services;
 - (iii) Community experiences;
 - (iv) The development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
 - (v) If appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.
- (b) Transition services for students with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or related services, if required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education.

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 140 (30)

§300.344 (b), Transition services participants

- (1) . . . the public agency shall invite a student with a disability of any age to attend his or her IEP meeting if a purpose of the meeting will be the consideration of the statement of transition service needs under §. 300.347 (b)(1); or the needed transition services for the student; or both.
- (2) If the student does not attend the IEP meeting, the public agency shall take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.
- (3) (i) In implementing the requirements of [paragraph (b)(2) of this section], the public agency also shall invite a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.
- (ii) If an agency invited to send a representative to a meeting does not do so, the public agency shall take other steps to obtain participation of the other agency in the planning of any transition services.

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(30), 1414(d)(1)(A)(7), (B)

§300.345, Parent participation:

- (a) **Public agency responsibility—general.** Each public agency shall take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate, including—
 - (1) Notifying parents of the meeting early enough to ensure that they will have an opportunity to attend; and
 - (2) Scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place.
- (b) **Information provided to parents.**
 - (1) The notice required under paragraph (a)(1) of this section must—
 - (i) Indicate the purpose, time, and location of the meeting and who will be in attendance; and
 - (ii) Inform the parents of the provisions in §300.344(a)(6) and (c) (relating to the participation of other individuals on the IEP team who have knowledge or special expertise about the child).
 - (2) For a student with a disability beginning at age 14, or younger, if appropriate, the notice must also—
 - (i) Indicate that a purpose of the meeting will be the

development of a statement of the transition services needs of the student required in §300.347(b)(1); and

- (ii) Indicate that the agency will invite the student.
- (3) For a student with a disability beginning at age 16, or younger, if appropriate, the notice must—
 - (i) Indicate that a purpose of the meeting is the consideration of needed transition services for the student required in §300.347(b)(2);
 - (ii) Indicate that the agency will invite the student; and
 - (iii) Identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative.

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(B)(i)

§300.347(b), Transition services:

The IEP must include—

- (1) For each student beginning at age 14 (or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team), and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student's IEP that focuses on the student's courses of study (such as participation in advanced placement courses or a vocational education program); and
- (2) For each student beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), a statement of needed transition services for the student, including, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.

§300.347(c), Transfer of rights:

In a State that transfers rights at the age majority, beginning at least one year before a student reaches the age of majority under State law, the student's IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights under Part B of the Act, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority, consistent with §300.517.

§300.347 (d), Students with disabilities convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons:

Special rules concerning the content of IEPs for students with disabilities convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons are contained in §300.311(b) and (c).

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A) and (d)(6)(A)(ii).

Rehabilitation Act

Two very important aspects of the 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act are the underlying values of self-determination and inclusion. For example, the findings portion of Title I states:

Congress finds that—

- (1) millions of Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities and the number of Americans with such disabilities is increasing;
- (2) individuals with disabilities constitute one of the most disadvantaged groups in society;
- (3) ...
- (4) increased employment of individuals with disabilities can be achieved through ... the provision of independent living services, support services, and meaningful opportunities for employment in integrated work settings through the provision of reasonable accommodations;
- (5) ...
- (6) the goals of the Nation properly include the goal of providing individuals with disabilities with the tools necessary to—
 - (A) make informed choices and decisions; and
 - (B) achieve equality of opportunity, full inclusion and integration in society, employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency, for such individuals.

The 1998 amendments adopt the definition of transition services contained within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

The term "transition services" means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to postschool activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Section 7(37)

The amendments strengthen language regarding interagency collaboration; agreements are required in order to:

- (A) facilitate the development and accomplishment of
 - (i) long-term rehabilitation goals;
 - (ii) intermediate rehabilitation objectives; and
 - (iii) goals and objectives related to enabling a student to live independently before the student leaves a school setting . . . and
- (B) facilitate the transition from the provision of a free appropriate public education . . . to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services . . . including the specification of plans for coordination with educational agencies in the provision of transition services, . . . consistent with the individualized written rehabilitation program of the individual.

These statements encourage vocational rehabilitation counselors to become involved while students are still in school.

Minnesota Transition Legislation

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Every district must ensure the following: all students with disabilities are provided the special instruction and services which are appropriate to their needs. . . . The student's needs and the special instruction and services to be provided shall be agreed upon through the development of an individual education plan. The plan must address the student's need to develop skills to live and work as independently as possible within the community. By grade 9 or age 14, the plan must address the student's needs for transition from secondary services to post-secondary education and training, employment, community participation, recreation and leisure, and home living. In developing the plan, districts must inform parents of the full range of transitional goals and related services that should be considered. The plan must include a statement of the needed transition services, including a statement of the interagency responsibilities or linkages or both before secondary services are concluded.

(Minnesota Statutes 1999, §125A.08)

Minnesota Graduation Requirements

Beginning at grade 9 or age 14 and annually thereafter, the IEP team shall address the graduation requirements for a high school diploma for a pupil.

- A. The team must determine those course, programs, or classes that must be successfully completed by regular education students in the regular education program which are needed to attain a high school diploma and are appropriate and attainable by the pupil.
- B. The team must determine those courses, programs, or classes which are needed to attain a high school diploma that cannot be successfully attained by the pupil without special education or are not appropriate for the pupil. These requirements must be modified on the IEP or waived by the IEP team.
- C. The standard for a pupil's attainment of a high school diploma shall be:
 - (1) those courses, programs, or classes identified in item A;
 - (2) those modified and waived courses, programs, or classes determined in item B; and
 - (3) the pupil's goals and objectives on the IEP.
- D. The IEP team shall determine the criteria for satisfactory achievement of the IEP goals and objectives including modified courses, programs, or classes.

A pupil shall receive an identical high school diploma granted to all regular education students upon graduation or termination of special education services through age 21, with satisfactory attainment of the program plan objectives.

(Minnesota State Board of Education Rules, Chapter 3525)

Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers

Parent centers in each state provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, school-aged children, and young adults with disabilities and the professionals who work with their families. This assistance helps parents participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities. Staff are likely to be parents and siblings of children with disabilities—or have disabilities themselves. They personify the philosophy of Parents Helping Parents.

To reach the parent center in your state, you can contact the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance), which coordinates the delivery of technical assistance to the Parent Training and Information Centers and the Community Parent Resource Centers through four regional centers located in California, New Hampshire, Texas, and Ohio.

Alliance Coordinating Office:

PACER Center, Inc.
4826 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55417-1098
(612) 827-2966 voice
(612) 827-7770 TTY
(612) 827-3065 fax
1-888-248-0822 (toll-free nationally)
E-mail: alliance@taalliance.org
Web site: www.taalliance.org

Paula F. Goldberg,
Project Co-Director
Sharman Davis Barrett,
Project Co-Director
Sue Folger,
Project Co-Director
Dao Xiong,
Multicultural Advisor
Jesus Villaseñor,
Multicultural Advisor

Northeast Regional Center

Parent Information Center
P.O. Box 2405
Concord, NH 03302-2405
(603) 224-7005 voice
(603) 224-4379 fax
E-mail: picnh@aol.com
Judith Raskin, Regional Director
Mary Trinkley, Technical Assistance Coordinator
Lillye Ramos Spooner,
Multicultural TA Coordinator
CT, DE, DC, ME, MD, MA, NH,
NJ, NY, PA, Puerto Rico, RI, US
VI, VT

Midwest Regional Center

Ohio Coalition for the Education
of Children with Disabilities
(OCECD)
Bank One Building
165 West Center Street, Suite 302
Marion, OH 43302-3741
(740) 382-5452 voice
(740) 383-6421 fax
E-mail: oceed@gte.net
Margaret Burley, Regional Director
Dena Hook, Technical Assistance
Coordinator
Gloria Mitchell, Multicultural TA
Coordinator
CO, IL, IA, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN,
MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI

South Regional Center

Partners Resource Network, Inc.
1090 Longfellow Drive, Suite B
Beaumont, TX 77706-4819
(409) 898-4684 voice
(409) 898-4869 fax
E-mail: txprn@pnx.com
Janice S. Meyer, Regional Director
Beverly Elrod-Wilson, Technical
Assistance Coordinator
J. Linda Juarez, Multicultural TA
Coordinator
AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC,
OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV

West Regional Center

Matrix Parent Network and
Resource Center
94 Galli Drive, Suite C
Novato, CA 94949
(415) 884-3535 voice
(415) 884-3555 fax
E-mail: matrix@matrixparents.org
Deidre Hayden, Regional Director
Nora Thompson, Technical
Assistance Coordinator
Patricia Valdez, Multicultural TA
Coordinator
AK, AZ, Department of Defense
Dependent Schools (DODDS),
CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR,
Pacific Jurisdiction, UT, WA, WY

The Alliance Coordinating Office at the PACER Center maintains a current list of parent centers nationwide. You can access this list on the Alliance Web site at www.taalliance.org/PTIs.htm.

Additional Transition Resources

American Association of University Affiliated Programs (AAUAP)

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 400

Silver Spring, MD 20910

301-588-8252 voice

301-588-2842 fax

E-mail: info@aaup.org

Web site: www.aaup.org/contact.htm

The national association representing University Affiliated Programs (UAPs), which support the independence, productivity, integration and inclusion into the community of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Council for Exceptional Children

1920 Association Drive

Reston, VA 20191-1589

703-620-3660 voice

1-888-CEC-SPED toll-free

703-264-9446 TTY

703-264-9494 fax

Web site: www.cec.sped.org

This international professional organization works to improve educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and the gifted. CEC advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice. The Web site offers a wealth of information on special education issues.

Transition and Beyond

HEATH Resource Center

American Council on Education

One Dupont Circle, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036-1193

202-939-9320 voice/TTY

202-833-4760 fax

E-mail: heath@ace.nche.edu

Web site: www.acenet.edu

Access to download HEATH publications via the gopher site:

<gopher://bobcat-ace.nche.edu>

This national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities serves as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations and opportunities college campuses, vocational-technical schools, and other postsecondary training entities.

Independent Living NET (IL NET)

National Council on Independent Living/ Independent Living

Research Utilization

NCIL/ILRU National Training and Technical Assistance Project

NCIL

1916 Wilson Blvd, Suite 209

Arlington, VA 22201

703-525-3406 voice

703-525-3409 TTY

703-525-3407 fax

ILRU

2323 S. Shepherd, Suite 1000

Houston, TX 77019

713-520-0232 voice

713-520-5136 TTY

713-520-5785 fax

E-mail: ilru@ilru.org

Website: www.ilru.org/

[irlu-overview.html](http://www.ilru.org/irlu-overview.html)

This collaborative organization works to strengthen the independent living movement by supporting the growth of organizations nationwide that provide systems change, promote consumer empowerment, and maximize the independence of people with disabilities. Requests for technical assistance are handled through a single point of contact at ILRU.

**National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils
(NADDCC)**

1234 Massachusetts Ave NW, Suite 103
Washington, DC 20005
202-374-1234 voice
202-347-4023 fax

Web site: www.igc.apc.org/NADDCC

NADDCC promotes national policy that enables individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to make choices regarding the quality of their lives and be included in the community. NADDCC provides support and assistance to member councils in each state.

National Association of Protection & Advocacy Systems (NAPAS)

900 Second Street NE, Suite 211
Washington, DC 20002
202-408-9514 voice
202-408-9521 TTY
202-408-9520 fax

E-mail: HN4537@handsnet.org
NAPAS@earthlink.net

NAPAS is a national organization for the federally mandated system in each state and territory to provide protection of the rights of persons with disabilities through legally based advocacy. It includes protection and advocacy (P & A) programs for people with developmental disabilities, Native Americans, people with mental illness, individual rights, and people seeking services under the Rehabilitation Act. NAPAS can refer callers to the P & A system in their states.

**National Association of State Directors of Special Education
(NASDSE)**

1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
703-519-3800 voice
703-519-3808 fax
703-519-7008 TDD

Web site: www.nasdse.org

This national association promotes and supports education programs for students with disabilities in the United States. Through publications, projects, and educational policy work, NASDSE links state professionals and citizens interested in improving special education.

Transition and Beyond

National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC)

8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935

Silver Spring, MD 20910

800-346-2742 voice

301-588-9284 voice

301-495-5626 TTY

301-587-1967 fax

Web site: www.naric.com/naric

Funded by National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), NARIC serves professionals and lay people, family members, health professionals, educators, rehabilitation counselors, students, librarians, administrators, and researchers. Services include information and referral, customized database searches, document delivery, and more. NARIC can refer callers to their state vocational rehabilitation office.

The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)

PO Box 1492

Washington, DC 20013-1492

800-695-0285 voice/TTY

202-884-8200 voice/TTY

202-884-8441 fax

E-mail: nichcy@aed.org

Web site: www.nichcy.org

NICHCY is the national information and referral center that provides information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, educators, and other professionals. Its focus is children and youth (birth to age 22).

National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA)

Transition Research Institute at Illinois

113 Children's Research Center

51 Gerty Drive

Campaign, IL 61820

217-333-2325 voice/ TTY

217-244-0851 fax

E-mail: leachlyn@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu

NTA promotes the transition of youth disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, toward desired postschool outcomes, including work, postsecondary education and training, and independent living. It provides technical assistance and information to policymakers, administrators, teachers, employers, parents, and individuals with disabilities.

National Transition Network (NTN)

University of Minnesota
110 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive, SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-626-8649 voice
612-624-9344 fax

Web site: www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn

The NTN provides technical assistance and evaluation services to states with grants for Transition Systems Change and School-to-Work Implementation and Development. Its mission is to help states improve transition and school-to-work policies, programs, and practices as they relate to youth with disabilities.

Technical Assistance about Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA)

PACER Center, Inc.
4826 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55417-1098
612-827-2966 voice
612-827-7770 TTY
612-827-3065 fax

E-mail: tatra@pacer.org

Web site: www.pacer.org/tatra/tatra.htm

The TATRA Project provides technical assistance to projects that are part of an RSA initiative providing training to families of individuals with disabilities. It has been funded by the Rehabilitation Services Act (RSA) since October 1994. TATRA is a project of PACER Center.

About PACER Center

PACER Center is a nonprofit, tax exempt organization begun in 1977. PACER's mission is to improve and expand opportunities that enhance the quality of life for children and young adults with all disabilities—physical, mental, emotional, learning—and their families. PACER now offers 25 major programs, including Parent Training programs, programs for students and schools, and technical assistance to parent centers both regionally and nationally.

PACER's programs help parents become informed and effective representatives for their children in early childhood, school-age and vocational settings. Through knowledge about laws, resources and parents' rights and responsibilities, families are better equipped to work with agencies to obtain appropriate services for their sons and daughters.

Below are just a few of the programs PACER offers for those interested in the process of transition:

Project Youth—Planning and support services for teens making the transition from school to work and independent living with a focus on health issues.

Project PRIDE (PACER's Rehabilitation Act Information & Disability Education)—Information and training for people with disabilities, their families and social service professionals about the Rehabilitation Act and similar legislation.

Workplace Transition—Information and training for supervisors and co-workers to provide on-the-job support to people with disabilities.

Minnesota Parent Center—Individual assistance, workshops and information for families and professionals encouraging involvement in the education of all children.

The Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE)—PACER serves as the coordinating office for a national, federally funded partnership linking families and advocates with researchers and policymakers. Its focus is the implementation of the IDEA Amendments of 1997. This partnership will work with those who formulate and implement policy to ensure improvement of results for children receiving special education. Check out the website at www.fape.org.

TATRA (Technical Assistance on Training about the Rehabilitation Act). Provides education assistance for parent centers nationwide.

The Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance). Offers consultation for the 100 federally funded parent centers across the country. Check out the resources on the Web site at www.taalliance.org.

For more information about transition, please visit our Web site at www.pacer.org and go to "Employment Strategies for Youth and Adults with Disabilities."



www.pacer.org